



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

NUMBER:
FOR RELEASE:
<http://www.dhs.ca.gov>

06-25
IMMEDIATE

DATE:
CONTACT: Ken August
or Lea Brooks
(916) 440-7660

SMOKING RATES IN CALIFORNIA FALL TO AN ALL-TIME LOW *Smoking Among Adults Ages 45 to 64 and Men Show Largest Declines*

SACRAMENTO – California's adult smoking rate dropped to 14.0 percent last year, the state's lowest level on record, State Health Director Sandra Shewry announced today. The new mark is down from a rate of 14.6 percent in 2004 and represents a 38 percent decline since 1988, when California voters passed Proposition 99, which established the state's comprehensive tobacco education and prevention program.

"The continued decline in smoking is proof that the state's comprehensive efforts to stop tobacco use and improve the health of Californians are working," said Shewry. "Despite this great progress, however, there are still nearly four million smokers in the state. It is imperative that we continue our efforts to help protect all Californians from the disease and death caused by tobacco."

In addition to the state's overall drop in smoking prevalence, smoking among adult men fell from 18.2 percent in 2004 to 17 percent in 2005. This is the first time that the percentage of California male smokers has fallen below 18 percent. Smoking among 45 to 64 year olds also declined from 15.3 percent in 2004 to 13.8 percent in 2005.

The study also found that while 18 to 24 year olds are smoking less, they still smoke at the highest level of all age groups - 18 percent.

"The ongoing decrease in the number of people smoking in California is a major public health achievement," said State Public Health Officer Dr. Mark Horton. "With California adults smoking 25 percent less than the rest of the nation, our state continues to benefit from lower rates of tobacco-related illnesses."

The majority of lung cancers are linked to tobacco use. The continuing decline in smoking in California has helped promote a decrease in lung cancer incidence that is occurring four times faster than in the rest of the nation.

Tobacco use remains the number one preventable cause of disease and death in California, killing more than 40,000 Californians each year or about 118 people every day.

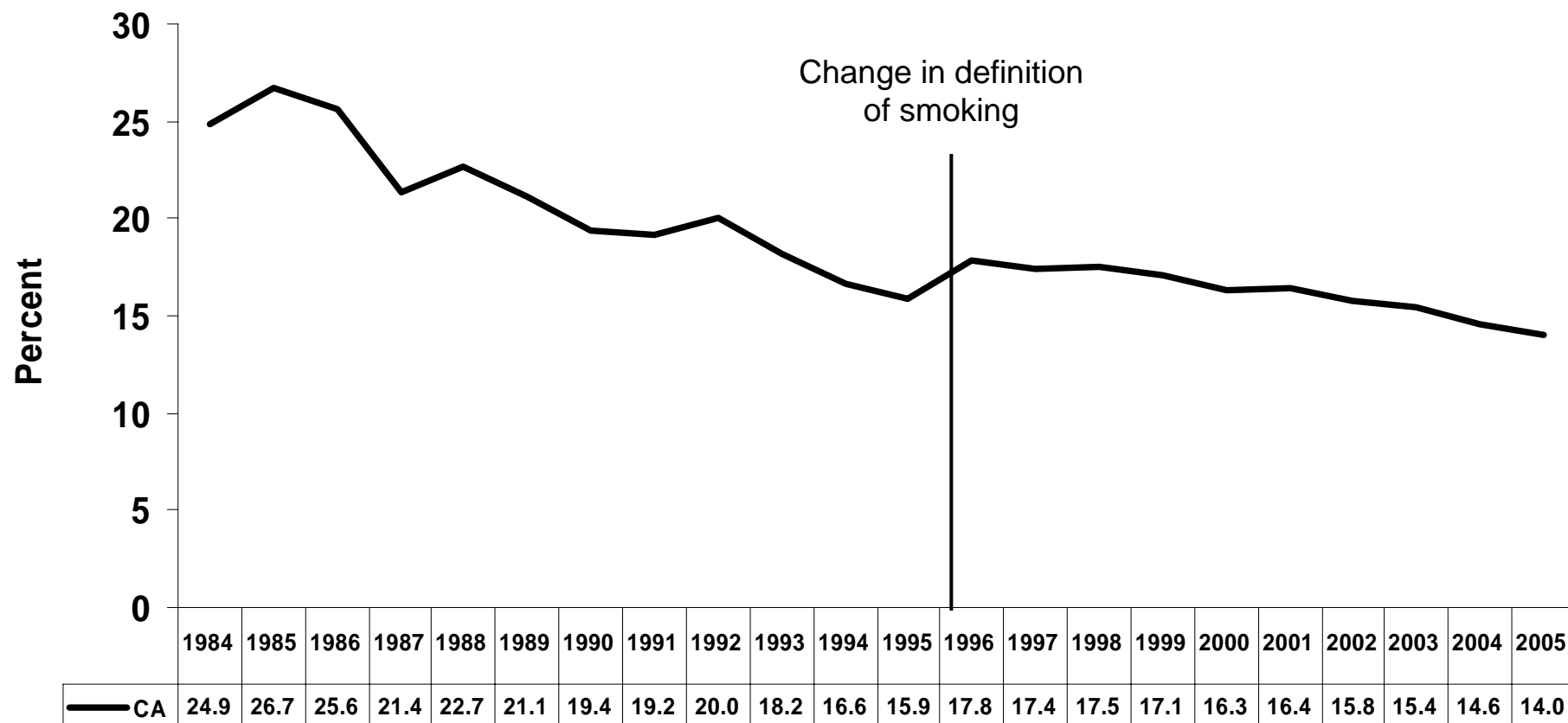
In addition to its impact on human health, smoking and secondhand smoke have huge financial implications. Smoking costs California nearly \$16 billion annually in direct medical costs and indirect costs, including the value of lost productivity from illness and premature death.

In November 1988, Proposition 99 was approved by California voters, instituting a 25-cent tax on cigarettes and earmarking 5 cents of every cigarette pack sold to fund the California Tobacco Control Program, the nation's longest running and most comprehensive anti-tobacco program.

Charts illustrating the data are available for download at www.dhs.ca.gov/tobacco/.



Smoking prevalence among California adults, 1984-2005



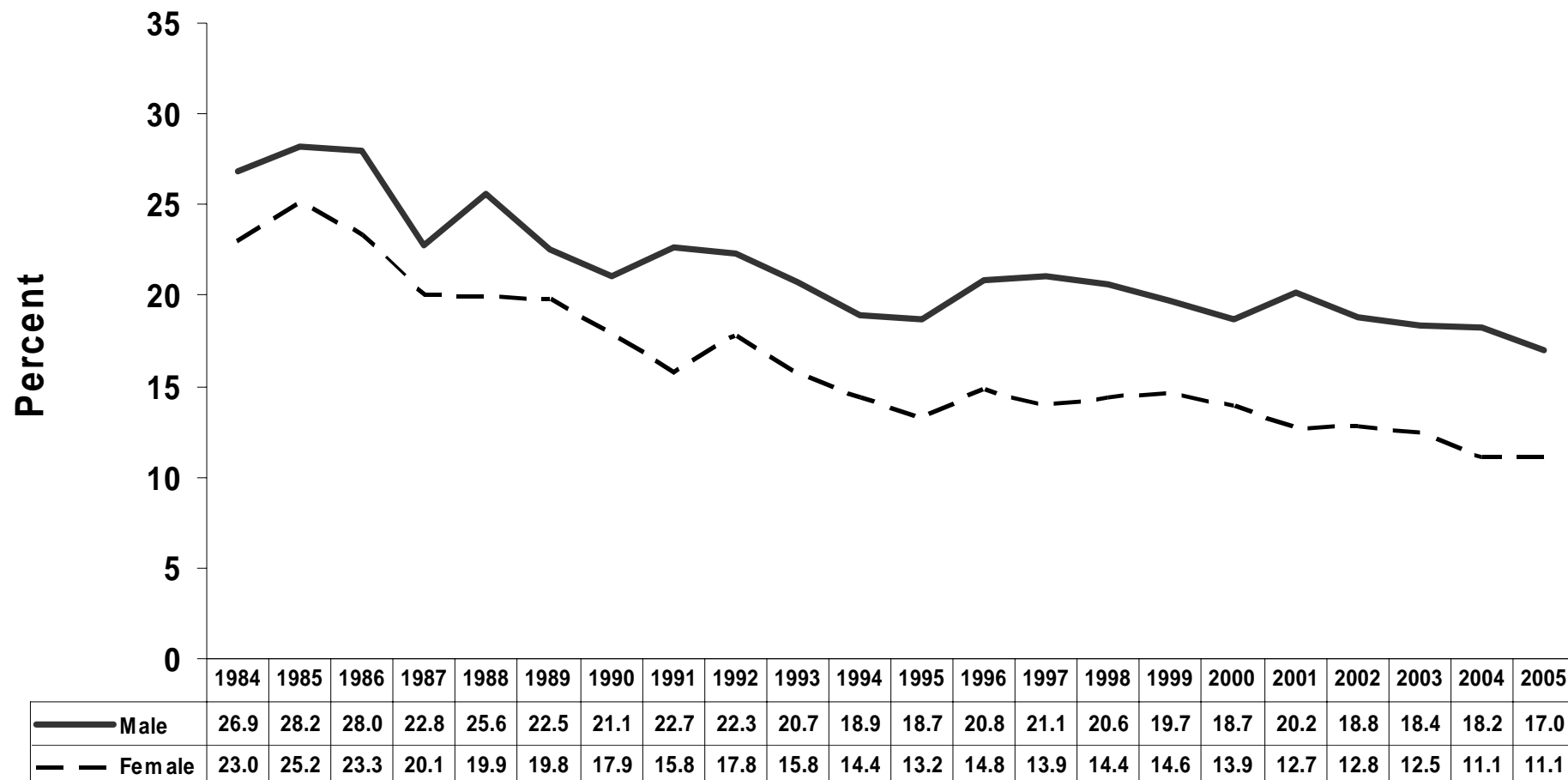
Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) 1984-1992, BRFSS and California Adult Tobacco Survey data is combined for 1993-2005. The data is weighted to the 2000 California population.

Note change of smoking definition in 1996 that included more occasional smokers.

Prepared by: California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section, March 2006.



Smoking prevalence among California adults by gender, 1984-2005



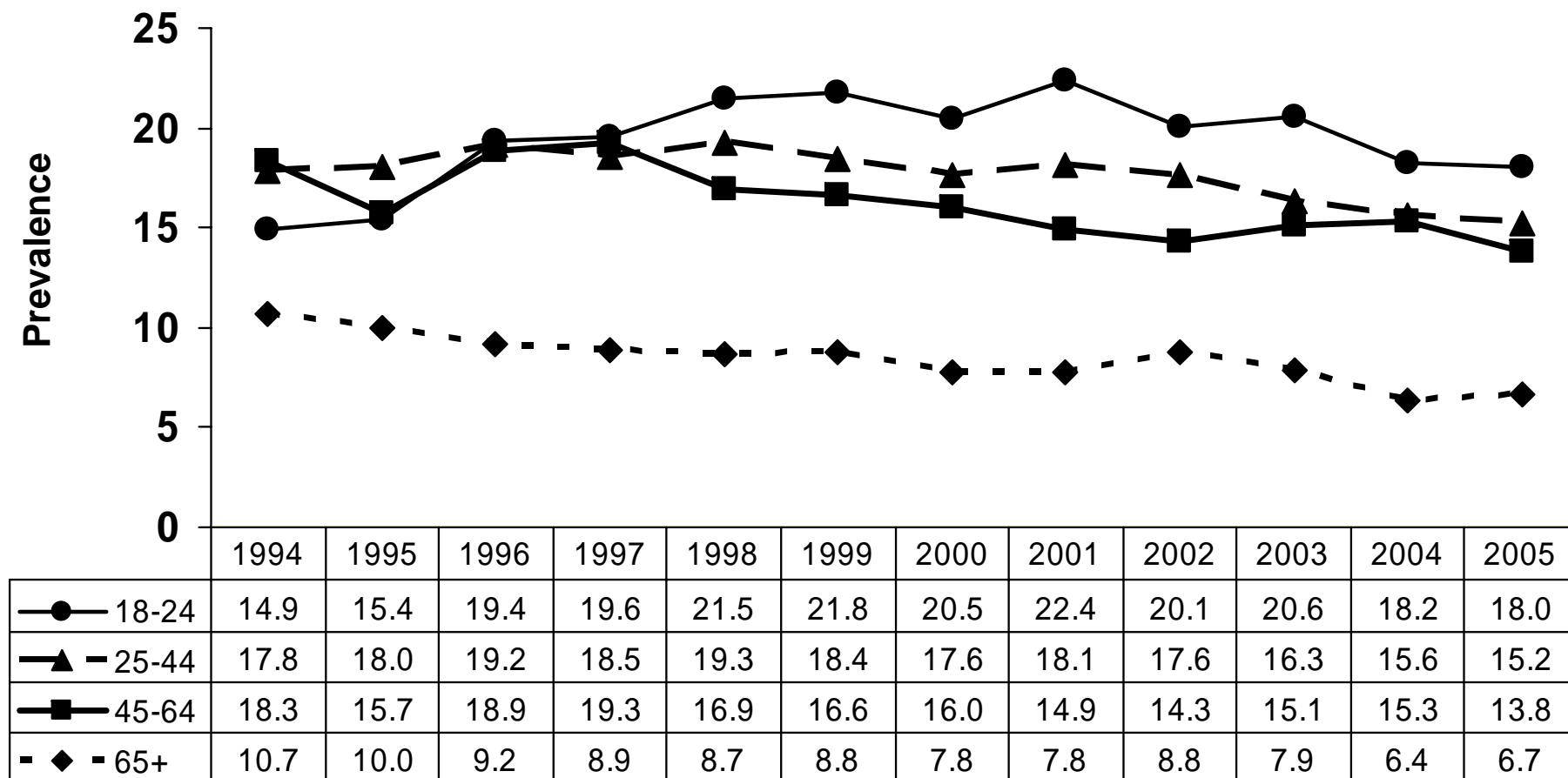
Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) 1984-1992, BRFSS and California Adult Tobacco Survey data is combined for 1993-2005. The data is weighted to the 2000 California population.

Note change of smoking definition in 1996 that included more occasional smokers.

Prepared by: California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section, March 2006.



Smoking prevalence among California adults by age group, 1994-2005



Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) 1984-1992, BRFSS and California Adult Tobacco Survey data is combined for 1993-2005. The data is weighted to the 2000 California population.

Note change of smoking definition in 1996 that included more occasional smokers.

Prepared by: California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section, March 2006.